

sense, that which can be initiated from the skin. The theories and the experimental evidence preferred by Von Frey and by Henry Head are critically described. The third and more modern major hypothesis, the pattern theory, finds its inspiration in animal electrophysiological findings. The second chapter gives a concise and worthy account of anatomical, physiological, psychophysical and mathematical methods available in the study of cutaneous sensation. The sensory apparatus i.e. the nerve endings, first sensory neurones and central pathways and their sensory correlates are described in detail. The author's expert grasp of a subject in which he himself has made notable contributions is everywhere apparent. The final section of the book is a general review of the subject and of future investigations and it gives some reasons for favouring the pattern theory. Correct emphasis is put on the necessity of agreement on precise definitions of technical terms, on the standardization of sensory testing methods and on presenting data in quantitative forms. This last prerequisite for a successful revival of interest in the clinical study of sensation could be achieved by the co-operation of clinician and workers in other disciplines.

The bibliography has considerably more than 1,000 references and after each chapter selected relevant books and review articles are given. This book by Sinclair will give the necessary stimulus and encouragement to anatomists and physiologists to engage in sensory research. One must agree with the view he expressed in the preface that a knowledge of cutaneous sensation can illuminate the diagnosis of neurological disorders. It is therefore compelling reading for the neurologist and psychiatrist and all clinicians. The preclinical student, the psychologist and the postgraduate medical examinee could consult this work with profit.

The style of writing is scientific and concise yet lucid, flowing yet not journalistic. In this book some of the quotes of other authors are apt, especially those of F. M. R. Walshe and the ethereal Sherlock Holmes. In the words of the latter "It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories instead of theories to suit facts". "Cutaneous Sensation" by Sinclair avoids this pitfall and will guide others similarly.

L.J.H.

PORPHYRIA – A ROYAL MALADY. Published and Commissioned by the British Medical Journal 1968. (Pp. 68; Illustrated, 12s 6d). London: British Medical Association, 1968.

On the 8th January 1966 Dr. Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter, who are well-known as psychiatrists and medical historians, published an article in the British Medical Journal entitled "The Insanity of King George III: A classic case of Porphyria". For the first time in a clinical study of the madness of George III, these authors consulted from that contemporaneous period, many volumes of Willis manuscripts, Queen's Council Papers, Sir Henry Halford's daily record over a 16 month period and the diary of Sir George Baker. Evidence was propounded that the King's illness was porphyria and not maniac-depressive psychosis as had hitherto been accepted. In essence the diagnosis of porphyria was based on the record of symptoms recurring during attacks, which included colic, painful limb paresis, marked tachycardia and sweating and "encephalopathy" with at times insomnia or excitement, raging delirium or stupor and fits. Also four references to discoloured urine being excreted during relapses were cited. A sister of George III, Caroline Matilda, was noted by the authors to have died of an acute ascending paralysis and if this were acceptable as a case of fulminating porphyria then the minimum requirements for a dominant inheritance of this trait would be fulfilled.

Two years later the authors and a distinguished scientist, Professor C. Rimington, jolted history in a startling way with an attempt to establish the diagnosis of porphyria beyond doubt. They surveyed the family history in the consanguineously related Royal Houses of Stuart, Hanover and Prussia for other cases of the disease and they sought biochemical evidence in living members of these families. In a scholarly, fascinating and exciting manner, evidence obtained from surviving medical records, is adduced that the disorder could be traced back to Mary, Queen of Scots and her son James VI of Scotland and I of England. Several members of the family, spanning 13 generations and more than 400 years, were con-

sidered to have had this Royal Malady. One living family member was found suffering from porphyria and in another biochemical abnormalities of variegate porphyria was found.

The above two articles form the main part of this handsome booklet produced by the British Medical Journal. Two shorter articles are also included, one on historical implications by John Brooke and the other a concise and easily understood medical account of the porphyrias by Professor A. Goldberg.

There can be no doubt that this has been a study of immense historical significance which must be taken very seriously because of the care exercised by the authors in consulting documents. The evidence which is so very well presented, will be discussed critically for many years to come. This, by itself, justifies the booklet which will intrigue all who read it. The interested student of medical history must also read the correspondence on the subject in the British Medical Journal subsequent to January 6th 1968 and in particular the letters of Dent (page 311 3rd Feb. 1968) and of Dean (page 443 17th Feb. 1968) and the replies by the authors. The repercussions of "Porphyria - A Royal Malady" may well be many so we should be prepared to read it with attention and be unbiased in its appraisal. Proven or not proven that will be the question. L.J.H.

EMERGENCIES IN MEDICAL PRACTICE. By R. G. Birch, M.D., F.R.C.P.
Eighth Edition. (Pp. xvi+852; figs. 119. 60s). Edinburgh and London: E. & S. Livingstone, 1967.

A TEXTBOOK with this title could be written in two ways. Either it is one man's view of emergency work, emphasising his pet subjects and viewing the field from his particular viewpoint. This viewpoint is determined by whether the author works in an industrial town, down by the docks in a port, in the centre of a metropolis or in a small market town in a farming community. The pattern of emergencies which emerges in these places will be quite different and in all the pattern will change with time. New industrial processes, new materials, new psychotropic drugs and new agricultural chemicals bring with them new emergencies. Nevertheless one man's approach to emergencies, his philosophy of management, can be of great value to students of medicine and particularly to casualty physicians and surgeons. The care of emergencies requires skill and judgement which is born of years of experience coupled with an awareness of the latest hazards. For too long the hospital casualty department has been the domain of the inexperienced or of the doctor whose ambitions lie elsewhere. These departments require a special skill and those with it should be recognised in the same way as experts in the other branches of medicine and surgery.

The second way of writing a textbook on "Emergencies" is to endeavour to supply all the factual information a doctor may need to deal with any emergency. This is manifestly impossible, and even if, as has been done by Dr. Alan Birch, a team of doctors is employed to write such a text it is doomed to be incomplete by the time it is published.

Dr. Birch's book contains many excellent sections and in some, such as that dealing with mushroom poisoning, there is information which it would be hard to find elsewhere. But parts of the text are superficial and even misleading. While describing the respiratory symptoms which often occur when paraldehyde is given intravenously, there is no mention of the fact that fatal pulmonary oedema occurs and that therefore paraldehyde should not be given intravenously.

There are many useful diagrams and illustrations, but some of these would be more appropriate to a short text on clinical methods or surgical handicraft. There are some misleading and confusing errors such as the labelling of the diagrams on page 175.

This is a reference book which should find its place in the casualty department of every hospital in Britain, but the consultant-in-charge should go through it periodically to make sure that the telephone numbers of the reference centres are right, that the methods of treatment are up to date and that the equipment referred to in the text is, in fact, available. But I would have preferred to have seen a text of the other type, written by Dr. Birch describing his own personal view and giving us his special knowledge rather than this attempt at an encyclopedia. P.C.E.